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ACTIVITIES REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON INSTITUTION-BUILDING *

* Report prepared by the Working Group on Institution-building, coordinated by Mexico.

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A. ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED

At the fourth meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (SCA-ECLAC), the activities of the Working Group on Institution-building centred on the project for the integration and harmonization of social statistics (INAES), pursuant to the terms of reference of the Working Group and with funding from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

The technical advisory and consulting group of the INAES project, meeting in June 2008, conducted a mid-term assessment in which the following advances were recognized: (i) Revision and use of the inventory of international statistical and geographical standards of the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics (INEGI) of Mexico in the areas of labour markets, health care and education; (ii) definition of the elements to be included in analyses: identifying concepts and definitions relating to integration and harmonization, especially the latter; description of results; qualitative analysis; and preparation of draft proposals for standards and recommendations; (iii) conclusion of the analysis stage relating to health-care and education and progress towards the training stage, solely in the area of labour markets.

B. RESULTS AND OUTPUTS TO BE PRESENTED AT THE FIFTH MEETING OF THE STATISTICAL CONFERENCE OF THE AMERICAS OF ECLAC

Three analyses will be presented (one on each of the themes: health care, education and labour markets) regarding the status of national statistical practices in the countries of each subregion in relation to international statistical standards. They will be made available to the members of the group and to national statistical institutes.

On the basis of the analyses, it will be proposed that the directors of the national statistical institutes should adopt any recommended standards arising out of the INAES project in order to ensure their application in the different countries.

The Working Group on Institution-building considers that the regional public goods arising out of the INAES project —three analyses and a training course on the subject of labour markets— will be delivered within the appropriate period following the extension of the deadline by IDB.

C. GENERAL OUTLINE OF THE WORK OF THE GROUP FOR 2009-2011

The Group's work during the period 2009-2001 will take into account the interest shown by the countries of the region in achieving better quality, harmonization and comparability in the region's statistical data, as expressed in the following goals contained in the Strategic Plan 2005-2015:

Strategic goal 3: Promote the development of technical and methodological capacities in order to generate high-quality statistical information in the region.

Specific goal 1: Promote cooperation and the exchange of experiences on worldwide best practices and methodological documents useful for the region in terms of the production of statistical information

Strategic goal 4: Promote coordination and cooperation between the member countries of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC and international agencies.

Specific goals 2 and 3: Support and strengthen bilateral cooperation between the member countries of the Conference in an effective and efficient manner, especially for the countries that are relatively less developed in terms of statistics; and promote the development of a regional programme to harmonize statistical information in key areas.

D. INVENTORY OF INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL STANDARDS: A TOOL TO SUPPORT THE HARMONIZATION OF NATIONAL PRODUCTION OF STATISTICAL INFORMATION IN THE REGION

INEGI in Mexico has been working since 2005 to produce an inventory of international statistical and geographical standards in accordance with its thematic organization, to be used as a reference tool for the statistical standards of its national system of statistics and geographical organization (<http://www2.inegi.gob.mx/estestint/default.asp>).

The United Nations Statistics Division, having been aware of the INEGI inventory project from its initiation, and considering it to be useful for countries needing to assess the degree of consistency of their statistical production with international standards, expressed its support for the project in a letter dated July 2008. IDB concurs with its assessment.

INEGI has requested support from IDB so that the Mexican experience can become the starting point for an inventory of international statistical standards for the region, in accordance with a shared thematic framework for the countries and for international bodies operating in the region. The inventory will provide the countries of the region with a methodological tool in order to analyse the main international statistical standards and, according to their needs, use them as references in order to improve data quality, harmonize statistical procedures and integrate regional data.

The inventory of international statistical standards for the region will be organized according to the various types of statistical standards (concepts and definitions, classifications, data sources, methodologies and indicators) and their data sources (frames of reference, glossaries, databases, information systems and other documents), in a common metadata model contained in a single database, channelling all access through a single Web address.

The starting point will be a thematic framework including common themes and sub-themes, contained in the *Statistical Yearbook of Latin America and the Caribbean* (ECLAC), on which the international bodies operating in the region request information from countries; the Regional Core Health Data Initiative of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO); the Millennium Indicators Database of the United Nations; the statistical databases of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and worldwide databases on education, inter alia.

The inventory will provide basic information on each standard (objective, international body recommending it, version and description of the standard) and will facilitate access to it and to data sources or original documents.

Conceptual maps will be used to show the relationships between standards from the viewpoints of the various international bodies.

After 18 months (the duration of the project in accordance with the partial funding from IDB), the countries of the region will have access to an inventory of international statistical standards on the themes on which international bodies request statistical data, which will promote improvements in the quality, harmonization and integration of statistical data in Latin America and the Caribbean.